

FROM BURNSIDE'S ARMY.

Full Reports from Our Special Correspondents.

Advance upon the Rebel Stronghold.

Details of the Capture of Fredericksburg.

TERRIFIC BOMBARDMENT.

THE CITY SET ON FIRE.

SHARP WORK WITH THE BAYONET.

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HEADQUARTERS GEN. SUMNER, Midnight, Dec. 11-12, 1862.

I have just returned from Fredericksburg. Last Spring, when I for the first time visited this, the most important city in the Valley of the Rappahannock, I was struck with its strong resemblance to the old villages in New-England, where scarcely a modern dwelling can be found, and everything bears a quiet, cultivated, finished look, as if it had closed its career of enterprise upon this earth and had rested upon a respectable competency. But to-day this city, once so quiet and attractive, is a deserted, ruined, demolished town—a heap of smoldering ruins and falling dwellings, which have for weeks been tempestuous and foreseen. Who would recognize it to-night? The heavens are red with the flames of the old mansions; the atmosphere is full of the smoke from the smoldering embers. The desolating blasts of war played and song for, have at last been visited upon her. What she chose, rather than surrender, has been her portion.

But upon entering Fredericksburg and groping through streets choked with burning timber and the mangled bodies of those who stayed until it was too late "to flee unto the mountains," allow me to return to this side of the Rappahannock, and from the Phillips' mansion now so well known to the readers of the Northern Press, as the headquarters of Gen. Sumner, review the events of the past few days.

In my last, the greatest, and the most important in its political results of any fought during the war, was predicted, in a few days. All who were within the lines of the Army of the Potomac saw it day by day gradually approaching. The exact day and perhaps the week no one could tell. But that this great army was soon to be hurled with all the force and all the skill its General could command upon the enemy, was known to all families with the exception of a small portion.

Quartermasters were standing every nerve to have everything in their depots ready at a moment's notice; commissaries were urging forward rations in abundance for long marches and a fatiguing campaign; the great pontoon train, drawn by one thousand horses, and managed by 1,500 picked men, had every man at work night and day to prepare for a moment's notice.

The hundreds of officers and orderlies distributed in picturesque groups around the mansion occupied by General Sumner, the bodies of infantry and cavalry continually moving past, the terrible roar of the artillery, mingled with the cheering sounds of bands of music, formed an *ensemble* words cannot describe.

The original programme for the movements of to-day included, beside the crossing of the infantry at five different points, a diversion by our whole cavalry to the enemy's rear. The latter part was entirely abandoned last evening—the former not having been carried out at daybreak, as ordered, in consequence of the inability of the engineers to complete the bridges within the fixed time.

The failure at the first stage of the proposed operations rendered the prospect rather dubious; but, fortunately, the apprehensions raised by it were not realized.

The presence of a considerable infantry force in the town having become disclosed by their attempt to stop the progress of the engineers early in the morning, the next step to be taken was to drive the enemy by shot and shell from their shelter among the houses in the vicinity of the points selected for the heads of the bridges. For this purpose an almost uninterrupted bombardment from nineteen batteries of heavy and light artillery was kept up for nearly ten hours. The intensity of this may be judged from the fact that at times over 300 shells were fired per minute. Some of the batteries used nearly 200 rounds.

Artillerymen that have been engaged in the battles on the Peninsula and Mary-land, say that the work there was not half as heavy as here. Toward noon the embarking fog had cleared away and a clear view of the opposite side was had. About 3 o'clock the firing ceased for half an hour. After its expiration it was suddenly renewed with doubled vigor along the entire line, and under the protection of a perfect hail of projectiles of every description, enfolding and sweeping every street leading to the river, the crossing was commenced near the uppermost bridge, by Col. Hall's Brigade of Howard's division of Couch's corps, with the 7th Michigan in the van, in the gallant manner fully described in the accompanying correspondence.

Slightly after dark all the five bridges were completed, but only the three brigades of Howard's division crossed over. They were, however, so distributed in the lower part of the city as to secure the complete protection of the bridges from any attack by infantry. The Rebel batteries are so situated on hills that they cannot reach the river bed. The structures here may be considered safe, and the passage of the army assured.

Early to-morrow morning, the whole army will move across. The remainder of Sumner's grand division, consisting of Couch's two other divisions, and Wileox's corps, together with Hooker's entire grand division of Steveson's and Butterfield's corps will follow on the three upper bridges, and Franklin's grand division of Reynolds's and Smith's corps on the two lower ones. One division of each of the two corps of each grand division will cross on the same bridge. As soon as the infantry is over, part of the artillery will follow, next the ammunition trains, then the ambulances, and last the supply trains.

Howard's division was alone thrown across to-night, in order to avoid my risk involved in putting the river between greater portions of the army from possible unexpected movements of the Rebels, whose conduct during the day has been extremely puzzling to our Generals. They replied to our artillery only at long intervals, and with few guns, their heavier fire—some twelve shots—being directed upon Howard's division as it was filing down the bluffs to the river previous to crossing. Their infantry forces in the town consisted of only one brigade. The weakness of this force, in connection with the fact that they knew with daybreak of our intention to cross, indicates that their Generals did not mean to seriously oppose the occupation of the city.

Gen. Burnside stated this morning that he had positive information of a diversion of twenty thousand of the enemy to Port Royal, 30 miles below, upon the supposition of an expected attempt on our part to cross at that point. This seems to show the complete ignorance of the Rebel Generals of our real intentions. The divided column is presumed to have reappeared before us this evening. It is the opinion of our leading Generals that, if the Rebels do not attack us to-morrow, a general engagement is likely to take place to-morrow, as the vastness of the army will require the entire day for its passage, notwithstanding it will move over five bridges.

The artillery from the sharpshooters was fired at precisely half-past five, upon a signal from two guns placed upon the hills below Fredericksburg. The instant the Rebels opened this battery and the sharpshooters fired upon the engineers, a tremendous fire from twenty batteries, comprising positions from Falmouth on the right to a mile below the city on the left, was poured directly upon Fredericksburg.

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The value of the services of the Engineers can never be too warmly appreciated. While they have never had an opportunity of displaying their courage on the battle-field, they are, in such occasions as these, engaged in the very presence of the enemy's skirmishers and sharpshooters, in such numbers, that they never would have been able to stand their ground had not the Rebels themselves used the brick and stone dwellings on the banks of the river for fortresses for their sharpshooters. The moment the stream of shell fell upon all the batteries in line, upon the city, the Rebels, by hundreds and thousands, could be seen flying from the dwellings in

our artillery on this side of the river, where it will remain until the contest is ultimately decided. Opinions among our officers vary greatly as to whether the enemy will attack, await our attack, or fall back in the direction of Richmond.

In the course of the morning considerable skirmishing took place in the streets of Fredericksburg between our infantry and the Rebel pickets in the upper part of the city. But now every thing is quiet, and an unusual stillness has settled upon the scene of the grand events of the day, in most striking contrast to the violent sounds and strife of a few hours ago. Of all the hundreds of thousands now around me, seeking in sleep forgetfulness of dangers past and coming, Gen. Burnside probably feels easiest, weighed down as he was until morning with the consciousness of the great responsibilities imposed upon him. Up to this noon many of the most prominent lieutenants doubted the feasibility of the movements he was bound to execute during the day.

But he, bold, confiding in the justice of his cause and the gallantry of his soldiers, ventured and won. May he awake to other days of triumph.

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the first slight cessation of the bombardment, and as the smoke and fog lifted, women and children were heard screaming and begging to be brought to this side of the river, and one poor woman was seen wringing her hands and crying, "Oh, my God! oh, my God! Save my child, it is bursting to death." A shell had exploded in the house and the building was in flames. In a short time other dwellings were on fire, and the scene then became one no pen can describe, no artist picture. The rapidity of the fire surpassed anything upon the field of Antietam. The gunners simply aimed at any mansion they pleased and then discharge their pieces. From half-past five until twelve there was no cessation of more than two or three moments duration. At twelve the fog lifted and a full view of the city and the surrounding country was afforded. Fifteen dwelling-houses were then on fire.

The Rebels, behind their intrenchments on the hills, remained as quiet as the grave. Not a shell had they fired since the signal gun at daylight. Reports ran through the camp that they had fallen back to the second range of hills, and would not offer battle until we had moved on to their own ground. From 12 until 3 o'clock our batteries rested, the work upon the pontoon bridge was suspended, and all sorts of wild stories gained currency. At 3 the ball again opened. All the batteries were directed at one spot, the dwelling on the bank of the river near where the pontoon bridge on the right was to be laid. The object was to drive the sharp-shooters from under the cover of the stone and brick buildings, and enable the engineers to complete the laying of the bridge. This last cannonade was the most terrific of the day, and approached the volume in all its features. No one will ever forget it who witnessed it.

The afternoon was soft, and clear, and beautiful. Gen. Sumner's Grand Division was drawn up in battle line awaiting the order to cross the river. Gen. Howard had been given the place of honor, and was to have the advance. Gen. Dix's old brigade, now commanded by Col. Hall, was to be the first to cross the river. The 7th Michigan and the 12th and 26th Massachusetts marched down to the bank of the river to support the Engineers in finishing the bridge, but through some misfortune the corps did not obey the order to go on with their work, but left it for the 7th Michigan, Col. Baxter, to complete. Determined that the bridge should be laid and Gen. Howard's Division over the river before sunset, these brave soldiers sprang into the boats, and, under the fire of the sharp-shooters, with their own shell falling by hundreds all around them, effected a landing on the opposite side, drove the riflemen from their hiding-places, killed and wounded fifteen, and took fifty prisoners.

The moment the boats touched the shore a shout went up from the cannoneers at our guns, from the soldiers drawn out in line of battle, from line and staff officers gathered by hundreds to witness the crossing, and from all spectators of whatever rank or class, that almost drowned the roar of artillery. At this moment Gen. Sumner and his staff came riding up, and seeing what had been accomplished, ordered a hand near him to strike up Dixie. The leader said he could not play Dixie, but would give him Yankee Deedle, and the band were about placing their instruments to their mouths, when a round shot from the enemy's battery, which had remained silent all day, fell plumb in their midst, and with it fell all the brave hand upon their bellies, as if each had been struck on the head with the shot. Discovering however in a moment that they were not hit, they sprang to their feet, dropped their instruments, and ran.

In the first boat that crossed the river was a little drummer boy of the 7th Michigan, 10 years old, by name of Henderon, who had begged to be allowed to go over in the first boat. He was one of the first to dash up the bank, and actually entered the water.

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